

March 1, 1991

LB 357

I have no amendments to the bill.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Senator Rogers.

SENATOR ROGERS: Madam Speaker and members of the Legislature, LB 357 would simply extend the sunset date on the Nebraska Farm Mediation Act from March 1, '92 to June 30, 1995. The bill was advanced from committee by unanimous vote. No committee amendments. The Nebraska Farm Mediation Act was created in LB 664 in 1988. Originally, it was introduced as a mandatory program between the borrower and the creditor and the bill was later amended and passed as an option program by which participation could be initiated by either party. Madam Speaker, the extension of the sunset date would correspond with the current date on which the federal matching grant programs will expire, extending the date under LB 357 that will allow Nebraska to continue to participate in the program. The Mediation Act has had a very positive impact, being a member of the Farm Credit Boards, I have been involved in some of these. For those who utilize the program, it's kind of been a cooling off period. It gives people a chance to sit down together and maybe pursue options other than foreclosure or litigation. Since its inception in 1988, there have been 393 requests and, of these requests, 109 were resolved prior to mediation and 190 cases were actually mediated. And, with that, Madam Speaker, I move advancement of the bill.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Rogers. Senator Rod Johnson.

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Madam Chairman...or Madam President and members, I would rise to support LB 357. I think it is an extremely important program that was instituted during the throws of a rather difficult economic time in agriculture a number of years ago when I happened to be the chairman of the Ag Committee and with the help of Senator Schmit and others we managed to get this passed. There was some controversy in this program over whether it should be mandatory or voluntary but I think the voluntary program has worked very well. And, as we look down the road at what might be in store for agriculture in the future, I look for this program to be a very important tool. Hopefully, it's not a program that any farmer in Nebraska would ever have to use but, as Senator Rogers indicated, it's a tool that's been very useful in providing some cooling off period, bringing the parties together, both the debtor and the